

Naval Support

The *Roberts*, *Delhi*, and three destroyers (*Brecon*, *Brissenden* and *Blankney*) would provide supporting fire for the assault, controlled by the Rear-Admiral, Force "V."

Supporting fire might also be expected from the bombardment group (*Newfoundland*, *Orion*, *Jervis*, *Nubian* and *Lookout*), under control of the N.C. Force "B" in the *Largs*; on targets common to the three Bark assaults.

Close support for the assault flights would be provided by four L.C.G. (L), one L.C.F. and L.C.S. (M). Smoke would be used to cover the landing craft if they came under effective fire.

One L.C.A. fitted with "Hedgerow"¹ would take part in the first flight of each assault.

38. NARRATIVE OF EVENTS, FORCE "V." THE APPROACH

9th July—D — 1

(Ref. Plans 4, 5, 5A)

The weather deteriorated during the afternoon, and a considerable sea and swell created difficult conditions for the L.C.T. convoy, M/S and other small craft in company. The good performance of the H.D.M.L.s, which joined at 1850, in maintaining station was specially commended. As the speed of the assault convoy had been reduced by the sea, sweeping from the 100-fathom line was dispensed with, in order to arrive at the release position to time.

At 2230, flares were seen on the port beam and searchlights right ahead. Until H-hour, continual bombing was visible and the town of Pachino was observed to be on fire. Enemy R.D/F was detected sweeping at about midnight, but apparently it did not discover the convoy. The weather had now moderated, leaving a slight north-westerly swell running in the bright moonlight.

At 0013, the *Mendip* (Captain (D) 21), at a range of 4,000 yards, detected and reported the beacon submarine *Unrivalled*. About this time a large number of troop-carrying aircraft passed over the convoy.

The headquarters ship *Hilary* anchored at 0048, in a position 233°, Correnti Island, 5.9 miles. Shortly afterwards, the convoy which was formed in two columns, anchored; its position being estimated by the *Glengyle* (S.N.O.L. (R)) to be 2.3' 108° from the planned release position.

On account of the intelligence reports received of runnels off the Roger sector beaches, an alternative assault plan had been drawn up in the *Glengyle* for the landing in that sector. The alternative plans were:—

- (1) Plan "X" (the original).—Assault troops to land in L.C.A.s.
- (2) Plan "Y".—Assault troops to land in L.C.T.s, embarking at the release position.

The necessity for two plans was unfortunate, as arrangements for the disembarkation had to be entirely altered and the crews of the landing craft were left in uncertainty until the last moment. On 7th July the adoption of Plan "Y" was ordered with the proviso that, if the L.C.T.s did not arrive, Plan "X" would be adhered to.

¹ Projectors for firing 24-60-lb. bombs designed to clear a lane through wire and anti-personnel minefields.

39. THE ASSAULT. BARK WEST

(Ref. Plans 4, 5, 5A, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13)

After the convoy had anchored, the commando flights in L.C.A.s moved off at 0115, followed at 0134 by the first assault flight for Sugar beaches.

Roger Sector

The L.C.T. group, delayed by the rough weather, began to arrive at 0140, the first craft going to load from the *Marnix Van St. Aldegonde*. As none arrived at the *Glengyle* her troops were embarked in L.C.A.s. Loading the L.C.T.s proved so difficult in the swell, that a proposal was made to transfer the troops to L.C.A.s. This was negated to avoid further delay. In the *Glengyle*, owing to the change of plan necessitating reorganization of the troops, the L.C.A.s. were not ready for lowering until 0226. The first assault flight for Roger sector, after some confusion caused by the *Derbyshire*'s second flight L.C.A.s persisting in forming up at the same time, moved off at 0315.

The Brigadier decided not to wait for the right assaulting companies from the *Marnix Van St. Aldegonde*, consequently the first flight was composed solely of the left assaulting companies from the *Glengyle* led by M.L. No. 4. Thanks to the Folbot the beach was found without difficulty and the flight touched down at 0455. Some slight machine-gun opposition encountered was effectively dealt with by the L.C.S.s. There were no casualties to craft personnel. At 0500, the L.C.T.s from the *Marnix Van St. Aldegonde* began beaching. The second flight from the *Derbyshire* followed at 0520 and the rest of the assaulting troops from the *Marnix Van St. Aldegonde* were all ashore by 0545.

In Roger sector the assault troops landed on Green I and II beaches, which from intelligence received appeared to be the most suitable, later it was found from surveys that Roger Red beach was the best for all types of craft. Attempts to blast openings in the off-lying sandbanks only afforded temporary improvement.

Sugar Sector

Meanwhile, the first L.C.A.s of the assault flight from the *Circassia* for Sugar beaches had moved off only eight minutes late, others from the *Llangibby Castle* formed up and moved off at 0155. L.C.I. (L) No. 116 on arrival was ordered alongside the *Circassia* to begin loading for serials,¹ a task made difficult by the swell. By 0203, the *Durban Castle*'s L.C.M.s were on their way to the shore.

At 0317, many flashes and other signs of activity were observed on the beaches and shortly afterwards a success signal was received from the R.M. commandos. Further success signals quickly followed, and at 0415, Sugar Amber beach reported being ready to take serials and that it was being shelled by a heavy gun. The *Blankney* returned the fire, bombarding the enemy battery until 0452 with 80 rounds at 6,000 yards range.

It was learned, from the first L.C.A. to return, that the landings had been made on the correct beaches and surprise achieved. Surf had carried the landing craft right over the false beach and machine-guns had only opened fire on craft when they were leaving the beaches.

¹ After the assault landing, the remaining personnel and stores were disembarked in a regular ferry series of trips.

After the channel was reported swept at 0425, the *Hilary* and *Roberts* moved into the intermediate anchorage followed by the other ships of the convoy.

At 0510, the *Roberts* fired at a 5-gun battery at Casa Giuliano which had fired about 12 rounds at the landing craft. At 0515, the *Puckeridge* bombarded a 4-gun battery at Casa Chiusa Garrano. The battery ceased fire and shortly afterwards was captured by the 51st Division.

Convoy K.M.S. 18 arrived at the release position at 0522. By 0530, success signals had been received from all the beaches in the sector and all shipping was ordered to the inshore anchorage at 0600.

The late arrival of the L.C.I.s (L), combined with their difficulty in loading, delayed the landing of the reserve battalion from the *Durban Castle* and *Llangibby Castle* by about an hour.

The *Roberts* at 0540, renewed the bombardment of the Casa Giuliano battery. The *Puckeridge* also fired at this battery at 0552 and again at 0600, when she closed in and silenced it, her first salvo landing on the parapet. This was the only coast defence battery that offered any opposition to the landing in Sugar sector.

During the assault three of the L.C.G.s (L), each fired 10 rounds at direct targets. L.C.G. (L) No. 9 blew up an ammunition dump from about 500 yards range. Prisoners reported being dismayed at seeing heavy gun flashes so close inshore, while the sight correspondingly heartened our own troops.

40. CONSOLIDATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BEACHES

(Ref. Plans 4, 5, 5A, 6, 8)

At 0720, the Brigadier and staff of the 2nd Brigade landed. L.C.M. from the *Empire Elaine* were ordered to the M.T. ships. When Roger Red beach reported being ready to receive L.S.T.s, No. 406 was sent there. After 0800 the L.C.I.s (L) began arriving back for the next serials from Sugar beaches and Dukws were directed into the beaches.

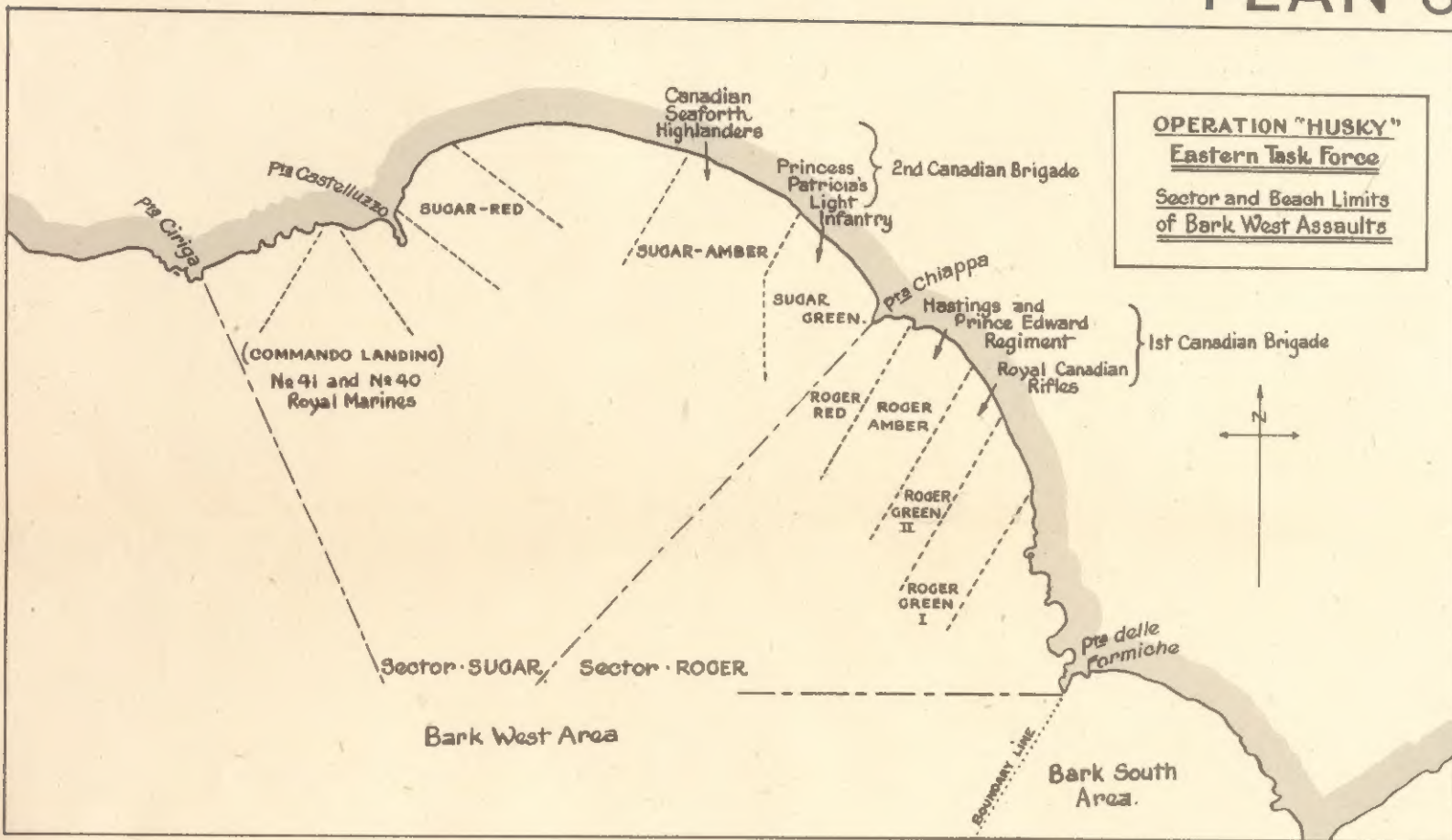
The S.N.O.L. (R) (Captain A. H. Gray) landed at 0800 and his headquarters and signal station were established by 1200. The S.N.O.L. (S) (Captain I.R.H. Black) and staff also landed after contact had been established with the main beach signal station.

Considerable difficulty was experienced during the day in maintaining the ferry service as many L.C.M.s stranded and had to be refloated. Most of the motor transport was landed at Roger Red beach, which, although small and rocky, was suitable for L.C.T.s, L.S.T.s and L.C.M.s. Other beaches in the area were shallow with continually changing sandbanks. Two L.S.T.s (2) beached on Green I, where vehicle landing ramps were used. At Red beach, inexperienced handling resulted in slow progress and as anticipated the L.S.T.s (1) were not able to beach owing to the flat gradients and shallow nature of the beach. It was decided, after reconnaissance of Sugar sector, to close Amber beach and open Red I and Red II beaches situated $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1 mile respectively to the eastward. Some R.M. casualties were evacuated to the hospital carrier in the evening.

PLAN 8

OPERATION "HUSKY" Eastern Task Force

Sector and Beach Limits of Bark West Assaults



TSD/HS(393)

12th July—D + 2

At about 0100, the *Blankney* and *Brissenden* collided while on A/S patrol. Both ships had to be detached later to Malta for repairs; the *Brissenden* suffered severe damage, and had one rating killed and four injured.

Discharge was continued at Red I beach in Sugar sector, and several L.C.T.s were beached on Red II. One out of every three vehicles was drowned in landing and the army reported the roads behind the beaches to be in a bad state.

At 1015, the *Brocklesby* arrived at Bark West with the N.C.E.T.F. (Admiral Ramsay), General Eisenhower and General Montgomery on board. From all reports received the Allied advance appeared to be going well.

The "G" Naval Commando was moved from Sugar sector to begin work at Bark South, the "N" Commando taking over Sugar sector in addition to Roger sector. In response to an urgent call for petrol the L.C.T.s worked all night.

The *Brissenden*, with several landing craft, sailed at 2200 for Malta.

13th July—D + 3

The N.C.F. "V" (Rear-Admiral Vian) assumed command of all three Bark sectors from 0400, when the N.C.F. "B" (Rear-Admiral McGrigor) was transferred to Syracuse as F.O. Sy.

The S.N.O.L. (S) and staff left Beach 57 for Amber beach Bark South, which had already been developed by the S.N.O.L. (Q) (Captain Dickinson), and was superior in every respect to Beach 57. At the eastern end, L.S.T.s and L.C.T.s could be beached east of Punta Port Palo on rocky ground without using ramps, while L.C.M.s could land stores almost dryshod at the western end which was backed by a good maintenance area. Also a pontoon had been constructed off the beach.

Some shipping from Bark West, consisting of 3 personnel ships, 14 M.T. ships and 2 petrol carriers, was sailed for Bark South. By 1630, all the personnel were landed in L.C.I.s (L) and L.C.M.s at Bark South, the M.T. ships were discharged by L.C.T.s transferred from Sugar sector and some 50 Dukws began unloading stores—mainly petrol. At 1930, the three personnel ships were sailed under escort for Malta and four empty M.T. ships sailed in convoy for Tripoli. The *Blankney* left with the convoy for Malta.

14th July—D + 4

The S.N.O.L.s (S) headquarters was set up in a house above Punta Porto Palo and a V/S signal station established in the centre of Amber beach.

All unloading at Bark West had now stopped and the remainder of the shipping was cleared from there by 2030. The *Hilary* anchored at Bark South the same night. The M.T. ships were apportioned between Bark South and Bark East with a resultant improvement in the rate of unloading. The light forces on patrol and A.A. guard duties were reorganized. Sporadic air attacks were made on shipping anchored off the beaches and on the patrols at night, but there were neither damage nor casualties.

41. AMALGAMATION OF THE BARK SECTORS**15th July—D + 5**

(Ref. Plans 4, 5, 6)

The "N" Naval Commando was moved from Bark West to Amber beach Bark South, leaving only a small party to complete the salvage of stranded craft. The L.C.M.s having finished discharging the assault convoy at Bark West were sent to Bark South.

By now the number of Dukws employed had been increased to about 160 and in the absence of trucks they were employed moving stores from landing craft to dumps. Two M.T. ships were sailed in the evening and some 900 Italian prisoners of war were evacuated in L.S.T.s returning to North Africa.

At Bark West, during the period 10th–11th July, the following were landed in the Roger sector:—

	Personnel	Vehicles	Stores (tons)
D-day	10,200	310	100
D + 1	700	350	500
D + 2	1,146	323	700
	12,046	983	1,300

The total numbers and quantities dealt with by "N" Commando¹ between D-day and D + 5 were stated as:—

Personnel, 12,000; vehicles, 1,600; stores (tons) 1,100.

16th July—D + 6

At Bark South good progress was made in landing stores, three mobile cranes were used on the pontoon discharging heavy loads from L.C.T.s while Scammell trucks off-loaded crates from beached L.C.M.s. During the day about 1,800 tons of stores were landed and a further 900 prisoners of war evacuated.

17th July—D + 7

Four M.T. ships and two cased petrol carriers were cleared and sailed, leaving eight ships in the anchorage. Two thousand two hundred tons of stores were discharged.

18th July—D + 8

After adjustment of the system of unloading, the day's total discharge of stores was raised to 2,379 tons.

19th July—D + 9

Total of stores discharged was 2,433 tons.

20th July—D + 10

By the use of roller runways and 70 more trucks, the total discharge of stores was 3,445 tons on the beaches and 230 tons on the Hard (Amber II).

¹ Chiefly at Sugar Sector.

21st July—D + 11

Two M.T. ships completed unloading, the total discharge for the day was 4,406 tons.

22nd July—D + 12

A total of 2,129 tons of stores was discharged, four more M.T. ships finished unloading, leaving four, which were expected to complete discharge early on 23rd July.

The S.N.O.L. (S) (Captain Black) gives the following statement of unloading:—

In the Sugar sector *Bark West—Beach 57*:—

D-day to D + 3—Personnel, 8,208; vehicles, 660; stores (tons) 150.

*Bark South—Beach 56*¹:—

D + 3 to D + 12—Personnel, 16,573²; vehicles, 3,946; stores (tons) 21,291.

The Bark beaches were closed, except to ferry service, at 1100 on 23rd July, when the last M.T. ships of convoy K.M.S. 19 were sailed.

42. REMARKS BY THE N.C.F. "V"

The following is a summary of certain comments in the report of Rear-Admiral Sir P. Vian on the Bark areas:—

Naval Supporting Fire

Owing to the ineffectiveness of the coastal defences and the speed of the army's advance, the only naval supporting fire called for (apart from bombardments by the *Robertis* and *Puckeridge* at first light on D-day) was in the form of harassing fire on areas ahead of the front line of the 1st Canadian Division.

Communications were fair; the breakdown of the L.C.G.s (L) W/T was disappointing, and was due to the inability of inexperienced operators to get their sets working after damage caused by heavy seas.

Underwater Obstacles

No underwater obstacles or shallow water mines were encountered. Land mines, which were scattered, were generally well inland of the beaches. Several channels were blown off Roger Red beach, but they quickly silted up again.

Smoke Protection

As the enemy batteries did not fire on the shipping, smoke screening was not employed during the assault. Against air attack at Bark West and Bark South smoke screens were used.

Smoke screening was controlled from the headquarters ship; it was not used by day.

¹All vehicles were landed on the Hard (Amber II), the total includes those of the 51st Division. The stores landed do not include stores discharged from the ferry service on the Hard.

²Of this total, 7,331 personnel landed with the vehicles.

After the first night arrangements worked well, the anchorage being completely blanked out. During the raid of 14th/15th July, the only determined raid on the Bark South area, smoke was started ten minutes before the first raiders came over. Their attack, in which bombs, torpedoes and circling torpedoes were dropped, was made on the screening destroyers some four to five miles off the beaches.

Unloading

The Bark West beaches were unsuitable for unloading on all counts; loaded craft grounded far from the shore, ships could not be anchored close in and were exposed to the prevailing wind.

The S.N.O.L. organizations of Force "V" took a long time settling down: the crews of the L.C.T.s were good, but those of the L.C.M.s bad. Generally the craft were satisfactory.

In the main, quick unloading lies in the hands of the military:—

- Heavy weights, other than wheeled vehicles must not form part of the cargoes.
- There must be a sufficiency of docks operating companies to work round the clock on board ships.
- Beach bricks must be sufficient in numbers to unload craft as they arrive on the beaches.
- The number of trucks or Dukws must be adequate to off-load cargo from beached craft to the beach dumps.
- There must be sufficient transport to carry stores forward from the beach dumps.
- Above all, the system of priorities in unloading must be used with discretion.

The inadequacy of labour was only surmounted when the military were persuaded to employ prisoners of war ashore and afloat. The transport situation in the initial stages was grave; the trucks being required in the forward areas were not available to off-load craft, or to clear the dumps.

Transport difficulties were accentuated by the distances between the beach and the forward dumps. On arrival of a convoy, vehicles should have priority, but if this is extended to petrol, ammunition, fuel, etc., without regard to the necessity of quickly clearing the holds, ships may be any time unloading.

Landing Craft

The losses of landing craft working with Force "V" were:—

Lost on passage .. 4 L.C.M.s (3), 1 L.C.E.

Lost on operation .. 3 L.C.A.s, 1 L.C.P. (L), 1 L.C.E.

Of the remainder, almost all the L.C.A.s and L.C.P.s were in good condition, 25 per cent. of the L.C.M.s and the majority of the L.C.M.s (1) became unserviceable. Defective craft were sent in M.T. ships to Tripoli or towed to Malta.

Medical

The medical arrangements were not fully tested. Casualties in the Bark West area were few, those incurred in the initial assault were evacuated in the personnel ships. The total casualties evacuated were 656, about 75 per cent. being cot cases. Water ambulances were used with success and proved completely reliable. The period that the hospital carriers could remain off the beaches was limited by their supplies of water, fuel and provisions. By supplying them from ships present they could be kept for approximately a week.

43. REMARKS BY THE S.N.O.L.s (S) AND (R)

The following points of local interest are summarized from the S.N.O.L's reports :—

Sugar Sector. (S.N.O.L. (S), Captain I. R. H. Black)

Finding and forming up on the beach-finding M.L.s at night is most difficult, they should be given a relative bearing and distance, preferably right ahead within hail ($\frac{1}{2}$ cable), as a position for the landing craft to get into formation.

Handcarts, mortars, bicycles and stretchers and other heavy equipment must be pre-loaded. L.C.A.s should be fitted with some type of quick-slipping device.

Beaches should be selected as close together as topographical features allow.

The S.N.O.L's headquarters should be afloat, an L.C.I. (L) is suggested as suitable. The naval parties ashore should wear distinctive armbands. A definite system should be established for provision of food for L.C.M. crews after the assault stage.

Roger Sector. (S.N.O.L. (R), Captain A. H. Gray)

Ferry service control was difficult because :—

- (1) After the departure of the *Derwentdale* there was no adequate organization for revictualling crews or for refitting landing craft.
- (2) There was a lack of boat transport for the staffs of the S.N.O.L. and the P.M.L.O.

The beach companies, split up owing to the change in the assault plan, did not complete their reconnaissance and find their feet until about H + 6 hours. Part of their equipment went astray and nearly 24 hours elapsed before the situation was stabilized.

Some packages, contrary to divisional orders, weighed as much as $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons and at Roger Red beach their clearance from landing craft was only possible by means of a small travelling crane.

Specially fitted salvage craft are necessary as stranded L.C.M.s (1) proved most difficult to refloat. The beach repair party should be attached to the naval commando under the S.N.O.L.

Rations were supplied by the army on the "come and get it" system; since the S.N.O.L. had no road transport, feeding was difficult. The army should allocate vehicles for the maintenance and supervision of naval parties working ashore. Tents are required for the protection of W/T sets and their operators; some signal ratings landed were without shelter. Field telephones and line should be provided for communication lines connecting the beach masters stations.

44. REMARKS ON OPERATION "HUSKY" BY THE NAVAL COMMANDER EASTERN TASK FORCE

The following is a summary of the remarks made by Admiral Sir B. H. Ramsay in his report of proceedings of the Eastern Task Force.

By reason of the weakness of the Italian opposition, the success of the assaults cannot be considered as a reliable guide to what may be attempted or achieved elsewhere. Nevertheless valuable experience was gained, notably in regard to maintenance through the beaches, opening of captured ports and naval support of the army in coastal operations.

Casualties to shipping and landing craft were considerably less than anticipated. This was due to :—

- (a) The very high degree of air superiority achieved.
- (b) The efficiency of the A/S organization.
- (c) The unexpected attainment of a considerable degree of tactical surprise which resulted from a combination of circumstances; e.g., the adoption of a waxing moon period for the assaults; the lack of enemy air reconnaissance on D - 1; a prolonged period of "alert" preceding D-day; the unexpected high wind which got up p.m. on D - 1. These factors lulled the enemy coast defences into a false sense of security.

The performance of the landing ships and craft was uniformly good. Creditable seamanship was displayed in the majority of cases by those in charge, having regard to their necessarily restricted training and lack of previous experience.

The Plan

Concerning the plan, Admiral Ramsay remarks that the primary consideration is the operational aspect. The army must first examine the implications of the land campaign necessary to achieve the object in view. After this the administrative authorities must assess the administrative implications.

In the early stages of planning for "Husky," too little importance and attention was paid to the operational aspect and too much to the administrative aspect, with the result that the outline plan was operationally unacceptable to the commanders of the Eastern Task Force. This situation was complicated by the pre-occupation of the army and air commanders with current operations and the wide dispersal of all planning authorities which resulted in a prolonged period of negotiation and delay.

Military necessity finally dictated the acceptance of administrative risks and the choice of a sound plan. Future plans should be based on operational requirements, not drawn up to suit administrative appreciations.

By the time the final orders were issued Admiral Ramsay states that he was satisfied that the best available plan had been adopted and his hopes that the weight of attack on a narrow front would overwhelm the enemy were justified in the event.

On the course of the operation from 1200, D - 1, Admiral Ramsay comments on several aspects :

The effect of the adverse weather conditions that arose during the afternoon and evening of D - 1, caused anxiety, but postponement did not seriously enter his mind.

The ships at the release positions apparently were not detected by the enemy defences and the only difficulties experienced in lowering and forming up landing craft were those imposed by the weather. The allowance of two and a half hours, from arrival at the release positions to H-hour, was not excessive as the majority of the assaults were a few minutes late.

The Assault

Generally the defences were taken by surprise when the assaulting formations landed and there was little organized resistance on the beaches. A proportion of the coast defences were not manned and those that were manned did not, in the majority of cases, fight stoutly.

At first light there was a certain amount of shelling from shore batteries, but these were effectively dealt with by the supporting forces. The effectiveness of the supporting fire from the naval forces was a feature of the operation; many tributes were paid to it, both by the army and by enemy prisoners. The moral effect of both the L.C.T.s (R) and L.C.G.s (L) firing from close inshore was reported to have been considerable.

Insufficient experience was gained in the operation as a whole to show how far the beaching of L.C.T.s in large numbers in darkness is a practical proposition. The problem of landing supporting arms immediately behind the assault infantry cannot be considered to be solved.

Maintenance through the Beaches

That the docks operating personnel in the M.T. ships was insufficient was borne out in "Husky". The inability to work the unloading of ships continuously created a bottleneck in maintenance through the beaches. Although at times the rate at which stores were unloaded appeared to be disappointing, the totals were greater than the planned figures. A striking feature was the success of the L.S.T.s (2), L.C.I.s (L) and the Dukws, of which the last appeared for the first time in European waters.

In general, the beach organizations worked satisfactorily. Task Group commanders, commented on the shortage of transport ashore to clear the beach dumps. This resulted from the very quick advance of the army. Against a more determined enemy it is not likely to obtain in future operations.

Air Attacks

The immunity from air attack was surprising, considerably greater than expectation. The first raid on our ships did not take place until 1015, 10th July. On subsequent days there were intermittent air attacks, principally on the East coast, and an increasing number at night. Only three M.T. ships and one hospital ship were sunk.

Attacks on Hospital Ships

The orders regarding the conduct of hospital ships were not sufficiently clear; the intention had always been, that if they had to remain off the beaches at night, they should remain darkened in the fleet anchorage and that normally full illumination would only be switched on when five miles clear of the beaches and while on passage. It is obvious that illumination of hospital ships stopped off shore provides the enemy with an irresistible temptation to attack. After the *Talamba* incident, hospital ships were kept in the anchorages all night without lights.

Army Liaison

Referring to the entry into Augusta, Admiral Ramsay strongly supports the recommendation of the N.C.F. "A," that foremost elements of the army should have some means of notifying their positions to supporting warships. On that occasion the large amount of motor transport seen was thought to belong to the 8th Army, and an excellent and easy target escaped punishment.

Ferry Service of Supplies

As the number of L.S.T.s and major landing craft serviceable on D - 1 was larger than anticipated, it was possible to commence loading the first flight of the ferry service before the assault ships and craft returned. The 8th Army plan was to clear the high priority vehicles and stores from Malta before working numerous craft from Sousse and Tripoli. In the first seven days, 56 L.S.T.s, 36 L.C.T.s and 33 L.C.I.s (L) cleared from Malta. Some initial difficulty was experienced at Malta, where the military organisation appeared inadequate to meet demands, but, after a shaky start, things went much better.

To reduce signalling and avoid delays, L.S.T.s and major landing craft engaged in the ferry service made the short passage without sailing signals being made. The organisation of a convoy was often only completed immediately before it sailed, a method which was fully justified in order to continue the build-up of the army as fast as possible. Only calm weather after D-day and an increasing period of moonlight rendered the controlled sailing of these unescorted or lightly escorted landing craft convoys possible. Although from the naval aspect the first quarter of the moon may have been thought disadvantageous for landing operations, in the event, against a weak enemy and with our possession of great air superiority, it proved greatly to our advantage.

Maintenance of Landing Ships and Craft

Although during the first few days of the operation major landing craft kept running well, Admiral Ramsay remarks that when his flag was struck on 19th July, he thought that defects were beginning to accumulate. A difficult decision in future operations will be: when to withdraw a proportion of landing craft for essential maintenance, a need that must be balanced against the vital requirement of following up the initial blow as expeditiously as possible.

Passage of Aircraft over Convoys and Beaches

Referring with great regret to the shooting down of a number of our troop-carrying aircraft by our ships off the east coast on 13th July, Admiral Ramsay mentions that the question of the engagement of aircraft off the beaches was always a vexed one during planning, and that the orders were twice altered by agreement with the R.A.F.

As finally framed, ships were free to open fire at night on aircraft whose approach indicated hostile intent, and, if friendly aircraft had to fly over our convoys they would do so above 6,000 feet. On the night of D - 1, troop-carrying aircraft were routed in lanes to avoid our convoys, but for the second airborne attack on D + 3, they flew low over the Gulf of Noto. It is understood that the Mediterranean Air Command had obtained the agreement of the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, to this some hours earlier, and that warning signals were at once sent out by the latter to all ships and forces concerned. It is not certain, however, that the warnings did in fact reach all the merchantmen, and by unfortunate chance a small number of enemy aircraft was in the vicinity at the time of approach of our aircraft. As might be expected, firing, which started spasmodically, soon became general, and it is hard to blame ships for engaging low-flying aircraft which appeared to be menacing them during an air raid. Only in very exceptional circumstances should ships be deprived of their right to open fire at low-flying aircraft approaching them. The solution must be always to route transport aircraft clear of our shipping.

THE INVASION OF SICILY

OPERATION "HUSKY"

PART III

NARRATIVE OF THE COVERING FORCES, LIGHT COASTAL FORCES AND SUBMARINES

CHAPTERS VII TO IX

SECTIONS 45-63

CHAPTER VII

45. FORCE "K" AND INSHORE SQUADRON: BOMBARDMENTS AND COASTAL OPERATIONS

(Ref. Plans 4, 5, 14)

During the assaults on D-day, close gunfire support to the military forces was provided by the bombardment groups, consisting of monitors, gunboats and support craft covering the landings in the Acid and Bark areas and by Force "K" under Rear-Admiral C. Harcourt in the *Newfoundland*. The distribution of these forces is shown on Plan No. 4. On 13th July, following the termination of the initial phase an inshore squadron was formed under the orders of Rear-Admiral McGrigor (F.O. Sy.) to act in support of the army in its advance northwards up the east coast of Sicily. This consisted of the two 15-in. monitors, two Dutch gunboats, four M/S, the 22nd M.L. Flotilla, two *Hunt* class destroyers, three L.C.R.s, three L.C.G.s, and four L.C.F.s. (See Section 49.)

At 0900/9th July, Force "K" sailed from Malta to rendezvous with the assault convoys¹ at 1200. On parting company with their convoys at the release positions both divisions of Force "K" proceeded to take up their positions for bombarding under the direction of the force commanders.

10th July—D-day

Although the enemy coastal defence opposition on the whole proved to be slight, the ships of Force "K" and the bombardment groups were called on to silence several inland batteries commanding the beaches and anchorages, also to bombard positions where there were concentrations of troops. These operations have already been mentioned in the narratives of the different areas.

The number of times that the cruisers carried out bombardments during D-day were: *Newfoundland*, 4; *Orion*, 5; *Uganda*, 5; *Mauritius*, 4. The attached destroyers also shared in these bombardments. In the evenings the groups of Force "K" either retired to the south-eastward for the night or remained in the vicinity of the anchorages. The *Uganda*, *Tartar* and *Eskimo* assisted in rescuing survivors from the hospital ship *Talamba* in the Acid sector. Ships of Force "K" aided in repelling the frequent air attacks that took place daily throughout the operation.

11th July—D + 1

The *Eskimo* was damaged by bomb in an air attack when taking the N.C.F. "A" (Rear-Admiral Troubridge) to Augusta. During the day the *Uganda* twice fired on batteries at Augusta, the *Mauritius* also engaged an 8-in. battery at Cape Cruce, Augusta.

12th July—D + 2

From this date opportunities for bombardment in the vicinity of the beaches dwindled as the zone of military operations on the left flank receded inland. The town of Mellili, batteries at Augusta and other strong points were bombarded by the *Mauritius* (10), *Uganda* (3), *Orion* (5).² The *Erebus* also bombarded Mellili and Augusta while other ships engaged opportunity targets. Messages from the 8th Army expressed appreciation of the support afforded terming the ships' firing as "accurate and timely".

¹ See Section 18.² The figures in brackets signify the number of times bombardments were carried out each day.

13th July—D + 3

Lentini and Carlentini were bombarded by the *Newfoundland* (2), *Mauritius* (7), *Laforey*, *Loyal*, *Lookout*, *Nubian* and *Erebus*. Heavy shells falling ahead of the *Mauritius* at 0923, obliged the squadron to turn away.

14th July—D + 4

The *Newfoundland* engaged four targets, the *Mauritius* and *Laforey* bombarded Lentini and the *Uganda* and *Orion* bombarded Catania.

15th July—D + 5

Among the targets on this day were, Catania, Misterbianco, Nesima, cross roads inland and gun positions. These were engaged by the *Uganda* (8), and *Orion* (8).

16th July—D + 6

The same targets were bombarded again, *Newfoundland* (1), *Uganda* (3), *Mauritius* (1), *Orion* (3).

17th July—D + 7

Ships of the inshore squadron were engaged, supporting the army's right flank. The *Lookout* destroyed two hostile batteries. At 1815, the *Laforey* and *Lookout* joined the destroyer screen of the *Warspite* and *Euryalus* proceeding to bombard Catania. (See Section 62.)

18th July—D + 8

The inshore squadron was active in support of the army's right flank. The *Laforey* bombarded Aci Costello and with the *Lookout* engaged opportunity targets on the Catania-Messina road, Aci Costello again, Ognina, and Misterbianco.

19th July—D + 9

The initial phase of landing operations terminated on this day, and henceforward the inshore squadron and the coastal forces came under the orders of the F.O. Sy. Force "K" remained under the operational control of the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, but was available at call of the F.O. Sy.

The *Newfoundland*, *Flores*, *Laforey* and *Lookout* successfully engaged some 17 targets, including 9 batteries, in answer to calls from the army.

20th July—D + 10

The *Nubian* suffered superficial damage from a near-miss during an air raid at Malta, and had four ratings killed and three injured. The *Laforey* engaged batteries near the Simeto River on three occasions, the *Mauritius* also engaged batteries and concentrations of troops near Catania.

21st July—D + 11

The *Newfoundland*, *Laforey* and *Lookout* engaged enemy positions in response to army calls. A long-range gun firing from the direction of Catania obliged the *Laforey* to withdraw during the afternoon.

22nd July—D + 12

The *Newfoundland*, *Mauritius*, *Laforey*, *Loyal* and *Lookout* were shelled at long range by unlocated batteries north of Catania.

46. H.M.S. NEWFOUNDLAND TORPEDOED BY ITALIAN SUBMARINE

23rd July—D + 13

The *Uganda*, *Orion*, *Tartar* and *Nubian* arrived at Augusta from Malta at noon.

At 1250, 23rd July, the *Newfoundland* (Flag Rear Admiral Force "K"), *Mauritius*, *Laforey* (D. 19), *Lookout* and *Loyal* sailed from Augusta for Malta. After clearing the searched channel, zig-zag No. 11 at half intervals was commenced, speed 25 knots, course 155°; the destroyers were stationed in accordance with Screening Diagram No. 3, the cruisers in single line ahead, 5 cables apart.

At 1333, the zig-zag was negated by a Blue turn to 135° to avoid a hospital ship. At 1341, in 37° 03.5' N., 15° 24.2' E., the *Newfoundland* was struck right aft by a torpedo.

The weather at the time was: sea, smooth; wind, light airs from northward. No indication of the proximity of a submarine was reported by asdic or radar in the *Newfoundland*.

Two marines reported having seen torpedo tracks at or immediately before impact. One seaman was lost, being blown overboard by the explosion which damaged the compartments aft of 185 bulkhead, the rudder and steering gear. As the *Newfoundland* was capable of maintaining 22 knots steering by her main engines, Force "K" continued to Malta, where it arrived at 1730.

Italian Submarine *Ascianghi* sunk

The *Laforey* had been detached immediately to hunt the submarine and destroyers under Captain (D) 8th Destroyer Flotilla, which were sweeping in the vicinity, were ordered to join her.

At 1428, the *Laforey* attacked a non-sub. target and at 1440 with the *Raider* (D. 8), *Ilex*, *Inglefield*, *Faulknor* and *Eclipse*, a "Box Search" was organised. At 1541, while sweeping northwards, two torpedo tracks were sighted coming towards the *Laforey* and *Eclipse* from a position 114°, estimated range, 3,500 yards. Course was altered to comb the tracks. The torpedoes were also detected by asdics. At 1550 the *Laforey* dropped a pattern of eight depth charges without result, the *Eclipse* attacking with five depth charges shortly afterwards. The *Laforey* made a second attack at 1557 and the *Eclipse* at 1608. After thoroughly investigating the area, echoes were obtained and the *Laforey* made her third attack at 1615 with eight depth charges. One and a half minutes later the submarine *Ascianghi* surfaced in the *Laforey's* wake. The other destroyers then closed in and opened fire with all guns. One rating was picked up by the *Laforey*, the *Eclipse* rescued five officers including the Captain and 22 ratings, one of whom died. It was learnt from the prisoners that the *Ascianghi* had fired four torpedoes at the *Newfoundland*.

24th July—D + 15

Rear Admiral C. J. H. Harcourt transferred his flag from the *Newfoundland* to the *Mauritius*. From this date the cruisers of Force "K", based on Augusta, had but little part in the operations which were carried out principally by the destroyers, the Inshore Squadron and Coastal forces.

47. COASTAL BOMBARDMENTS

(Ref. Plan 14)

At 0745, 4th August, the *Roberts*, escorted by the *Tynedale* and *Brocklesby*, left Augusta to bombard the undercliff road and railway near Taormina. Air cover was provided, also two Spitfires of the 8th Army Air Co-operation Squadron for spotting. Indirect fire was opened at 1140, range 19,700 yards in good visibility. After 17 rounds had been fired the range was down to 16,000 yards and direct fire was employed as the target was plainly visible. From 1218, a battery of small calibre guns, situated it was thought at Capo San Andrea, replied intermittently. At 1228, the *Roberts* made smoke, turned 180° and opened the range as the shore battery's fire was becoming more accurate. Twenty-five salvos had been fired up to this time, six more were fired after the turn. The spotting aircraft being obliged to return to base, at 1236 the *Roberts* ceased fire and set course for Augusta. It was estimated that 80 per cent. of the shots fell in the target area and that both the road and railway were effectively obstructed by debris from direct hits.

5th August

The *Quilliam*, *Queenborough* and *Quail* left Augusta at 2000, 4th August and carried out an A/S sweep as far as 37° 16' N., 15° 45' E. After reaching a position three miles east of Cape Molini a course was steered up the coast. Their mission was to bombard the coast road north of Taormina, which had been the *Roberts'* target, with the object of stopping any repair work. The target was twice bombarded at close ranges at 0001 and 0200, 5th August, starshell being used. Observation of results proved difficult, but many shells burst on the road. At 0345, fire was opened on lights observed three miles south of Taormina which were thought to be burning vehicles.¹

At 1142, 5th August, the *Mauritius* and *Soemba* (D) bombarded positions north-east of Catania, the targets of the *Mauritius* being Aceriale and a cross road at Giarre. Small calibre batteries replied intermittently and a shell hit the *Soemba* killing her captain and another officer.

6th/7th August

On 6th August the *Orion* and *Flores* (D) patrolled off the east coast but only received a few calls for support fire.

At 2000, 6th August the *Troubridge*, *Tyrian* and *Tumult* sailed from Augusta and carried out a sweep three miles off the coast between Cape Molini and Cape San Andrea. Two bombardments of the north-east end of the railway tunnel at Taormina were carried out at 0040 and 0350, 7th August. The target was difficult to identify although starshell were used, but it was estimated that a good proportion of the 300 rounds fired fell close to the target. A light battery close south of Giardini and a medium battery near to the target replied ineffectively.

¹ Ammunition expended :—

<i>Quilliam</i>	..	..	..	..	..	Starshell 39, H.E.D.A. 53.
<i>Quail</i>	..	..	..	..	..	H.E.D.A. 191.
<i>Queenborough</i>	..	..	..	..	..	H.E.D.A. 137.

8th August

The *Mauritius*, *Tartar* and *Nubian* sailed from Augusta during the forenoon, and carried out the following bombardments—1145, cross roads at Giarre; 1155, Riposto; 1555–1630, mortars and batteries west of Aceriale. Enemy batteries replied with fairly accurate fire from 1215 to 1220. Between 1720–1815 the same targets were bombarded again from a slightly more northern position.

The *Troubridge*, *Tyrian* and *Tumult* proceeded for patrol at 2000, 8th August, but sighted nothing in two coastal sweeps. At 0430, 9th August, they bombarded the Taormina railway tunnel and coast road, which were well identified in the light of starshell. Of 150 rounds fired a number fell close to the target but it was not possible to assess the damage. The Giardini battery fired a few rounds in reply.

10th August

The *Nubian* suffered minor damage from splinters in an air raid at Augusta. The *Uganda* and *Flores* (D) bombarded enemy positions north of Riposto during the day.

11th August

The *Offa*, *Petard* and *Raider* patrolled the east coast during the night. Fire was opened on searchlights which were immediately extinguished.

12th August

The *Mauritius* (Flag, C.S. 15), *Nubian* and *Tartar* left Augusta at 0920 and carried out three bombardments:—

- (a) 1205–1315, road junction north of Riposto;
- (b) 1320–1425, gun positions;
- (c) 1604–1630, batteries.

All the bombardments were reported to have been effective by the co-operating fighter-bombers.

At 1912, the *Uganda* joined the flag and the squadron swept along the Italian coast to beyond Crotona without sighting anything.

13th August

The *Soemba* (D) and *Scarab* bombarded positions in support of the right flank.

14th August

The monitors and gunboats were ordered to support the M.T.B.s whose sweeps were to be pushed well up into the Straits in order to interfere with attempts at evacuation by the enemy. They would be supported when possible by destroyers and the *Quilliam*, *Queenborough* and *Quail* were despatched from Malta to operate under the F.O. Sy.

The *Troubridge* (D. 24), *Tyrian* and *Tumult* on patrol off the east coast of Sicily observed demolitions in progress along the south Calabrian coast. Batteries north of Cape Pellaro which opened fire were engaged as the destroyers withdrew under smoke cover.

15th August

The *Aphis*, *Soemba* (D) and *Brocklesby*, operating close inshore, supported the right flank of the army. The *Tartar* and *Nubian* patrolling off Cape Spartivento during the night 14th/15th came under ineffective fire from batteries near Cape Bruzzano and Lacori. As the destroyers were returning they inconclusively engaged three E-Boats which fired torpedoes at long range.

16th August

The *Faulknor* (D. 8), *Intrepid* and *Piorun* (P) carried out an A/S sweep towards Cape Murro di Porco from Augusta. The *Troubridge* (D. 24), *Tyrian* and *Tumult* on patrol off the Calabrian coast encountered three E-Boats. The enemy fired three torpedoes which missed. The destroyers gave chase as the E-Boats retired under smoke cover.

At 0330, a force, consisting of No. 40 R.M. Commando with tanks, guns and vehicles, was landed successfully near Cape Scaletta from the *Prince Charles*, *Princess Beatrix* and five L.C.T.s covered by the *Roberts*, *Quilliam* (D. 4), *Queenborough*, *Quail*, *Ledbury*, *Wheatland*, *Flores* (D) and *Brocklesby* and L.C.F.s under the command of Captain S. H. Carill, R.N. The opposition encountered was slight, mostly from guns on the Calabrian coast. All the tanks were landed by 0830 and reports received later indicated that the commando had destroyed transport, captured a number of prisoners and inflicted a considerable number of casualties on the enemy. Four L.C.M.s were employed to transport troops by-passing road blocks on the Taormina road.

At 0700, two salvos fired at a range of 18,000 yards from a battery at Cape Pellaro fell within a cable of the *Roberts*. After shifting her position to outside 20,000 yards, the *Roberts* engaged this battery which was shelling the beaches. She fired four salvos, indirect firing (range 23,000 yards) and silenced the battery. With aircraft spotting the battery was engaged again at 0925 (four salvos, range 29,000 yards) and at 1000 (six salvos, range 24,500 yards).

17th August

L.C.I.s, L.C.T.s, L.C.M.s were employed ferrying guns, stores and reinforcements forward to Scaletta. Destroyers on patrol in the approach to the Straits of Messina engaged batteries and searchlights on the Calabrian coast. At 0205, M.T.B.s challenged four of our landing craft two miles south of Messina. Their failure to reply led to the M.T.B.s firing torpedoes, happily without damage.

British and American troops occupied Messina during the day. All organized resistance in Sicily ceased from this date, though batteries on the Italian mainland, which attempted on occasions to harass movements in the Straits, still engaged the attention of Force "K" and destroyer patrols from time to time.

CHAPTER VIII

48. OPERATIONS OF THE LIGHT COASTAL FORCES

(Ref. Plan 17)

During operation "Husky" a great number of minor operations were carried out by the light coastal forces of M.T.B.s and M.G.B.s, working, on some occasions, in conjunction with landing craft or with cruiser and destroyer forces. The principal object of their activities was to provide cover against interference with the landing operations by enemy light surface or underwater forces. Mention has already been made of many of their operations in the preceding narratives. The incidents described below are chiefly those in which the light coastal forces, acting independently, performed much arduous and gallant service in the approaches to the Straits of Messina.

9th July—D — 1

Operations of the light coastal forces commenced with the despatch from Malta of M.T.B. patrols to the approaches to Messina and off Cape Porto Stilo. The patrol areas were: A—north of 38° N., and B—south of 38° N. Some M.G.B.s were also sent to assist in operation "Arsenal" and to make a diversionary demonstration off the mouth of the Simeto River. The remaining flotillas of small craft formed part of the escorting forces of the assault convoys.

10th July—D-day

The night patrol in the approaches to Messina was devoid of incident except for an attack by four F.W.190s which dropped bombs. One aircraft was claimed as probably destroyed. Two M.G.B.s laid a smoke screen off Catania during the bombardment of the town by Force "Q" (operation "Arsenal").

11th July—D + 1

Three M.G.B.s patrolled off Augusta and three M.T.B.s in the Straits of Messina during the night. At 2015 the 7th M.T.B. Flotilla, after removing some documents, sank an abandoned auxiliary minesweeper 15' N.W. of Catania. At 2130 in 37° 34' N., 15° 43' E., the 32nd M.T.B. Division reported having sighted and attacked with torpedoes, depth charges and gunfire, a submarine on the surface. The submarine returned their fire, causing 17 casualties in the

Page 86, Section 48. Fourth paragraph, last line. Add footnote:—

"Later information established that the Italian submarine "Flutto" was sunk in this encounter."

M.G.B.s Nos. 662 and 659 accompanied the *Ulster Monarch* and *Tetcott* in the operation of landing a special reconnaissance detachment to the south of Augusta at 1945.

The 20th M.G.B. Flotilla claimed to have destroyed two aircraft during the day. At 2115, M.T.B.s of the 7th and 32nd Divisions on patrol were sighted and engaged by Force "Q." (See Section 56.) The patrols during the night consisted of four large and small M.T.B.s and three M.G.B.s based on Syracuse. In view of the importance of securing control of the Straits of Messina, all available British M.T.B.s and M.G.B.s at Bizerta were ordered to Malta.

12th/13th July—D + 3. Sinking of U.561

The patrol in Area A (north of 38° N.), consisting of M.T.B.s 81 (S.O.), 77 and 84 (24th M.T.B. Flotilla) from Malta, when south of Messina in position 110°, Raineri Point 1.5' at 2215, 12th July, sighted a submarine at 300 yards range on the starboard bow, which passed 20 yards ahead of the patrol at 15 knots. M.T.B.s 77 and 84, after going astern to obtain a firing position, gave chase. As M.T.B. 81 was about to proceed ahead across the submarine's wake, a second submarine was sighted astern of the first. No. 81 continued to go astern, while this second submarine altered course slightly to starboard. At a range of 100 yards, No. 81 fired her starboard torpedo and hit the enemy before her conning tower, throwing debris all over the M.T.B. Meanwhile the other two M.T.B.s pursued the first submarine, No. 77 crossing astern of her as she altered course sharply to port. No. 77 endeavoured to fire torpedoes, but both misfired, and she engaged with gunfire, the submarine replied and altered course again to port prior to submerging. This alteration put No. 84 in a good position, and at 300 yards range she fired both her torpedoes which missed ahead owing to the submarine's reduction in speed on diving. No. 84 then went ahead and dropped two depth charges ahead of the swirl. It was thought that this prompt attack may have damaged the submarine. While No. 81 searched without success for a survivor who was heard shouting in the water, Nos. 77 and 84 watched for the second submarine in case she surfaced. The submarine sunk by M.T.B. 81 was the German U.561.

Later the same night, when off Reggio, No. 81 sighted two vessels which were thought to be submarines. At 800 yards range she fired a torpedo which missed astern widely and the targets were then seen to be E-Boats making 25 knots. An enemy report was made, but on rejoining Nos. 77 and 84, touch was lost as the E-Boats entered Area B (south of 38° N.). At 2345, the 33rd Flotilla was observed engaging E-Boats and the 24th Flotilla steered north to intercept, until the E-Boats were reported as having been driven ashore on fire.

On leaving the area at 0500, an enemy report of two E-Boats was received from the 33rd Flotilla. Immediately afterwards, gunfire was seen and two E-Boats sighted steering north. Course was altered to intercept and seven more E-Boats in line ahead were observed disengaging from the 33rd Flotilla. In passing this enemy force on an opposite course at 1,000 yards fire was withheld until No. 81 was abreast the last E-Boat, when a brief gun action took place. Some small calibre hits were scored on the enemy; No. 81 and No. 77 sustained slight damage and a rating was wounded in No. 81.

12th/13th July. Actions with E-Boats

In Area B (south of 38° N.) the patrol consisted of M.T.B.s 655 (S.O.), 656 and 633 of the 33rd Flotilla. At 2247/12 on receiving an enemy report from the 24th Flotilla of two E-Boats steering 180°, 20 knots, course was set to intercept. At 2340, the enemy was sighted half a mile to the southward, up moon, steering 330° in line ahead at six knots. The 33rd Flotilla reduced speed and altered course first to close and then to engage on reciprocal courses. No. 655 engaged the rear boat, Nos. 656 and 633 the enemy leader, completely surprising them as they did not reply for 15 seconds when they altered course towards the Sicilian coast about 300 yards distant. The 33rd Division altering to starboard maintained its fire and steered at right angles to the enemy thus driving them inshore. The rear E-Boat taking fire burned fiercely, her guns were silenced and she ran aground. The other E-Boat, also on fire and very low in the water, went astern and tried to escape to the northward. Still firing her foremost gun she became the target of all three M.T.B.s, and when

last seen was heading for the shore. The action was broken off as shore batteries opened an inaccurate fire from 4-in. guns and searchlights illuminated the division. It was considered that both E-Boats were effectively destroyed, the damage sustained by the M.T.B.s was extremely slight.

At 0450/13, while returning from patrol two E-Boats (or M.A.S.) were sighted, bearing 150°, three miles. An attempt to close and engage had to be abandoned on account of the enemy's superior speed.

Shortly afterwards (0507/13) seven E-Boats (or M.A.S.) were sighted in line ahead bearing 30° to starboard, steering 340° at high speed. The M.T.B. division altered course to starboard and increased to full speed, No. 655 drew four cables ahead of the other two M.T.B.s. In a running fight fire was concentrated on the last two enemy boats, and many pom-pom hits were seen on the last boat which was believed to have suffered considerable damage. At 0515, the chase was abandoned as the enemy had greater speed. No casualties were suffered in these encounters.

49. ORGANIZATION OF THE LOCAL DEFENCE FORCES

(Ref. Plan 14)

Local defence forces were ordered to be formed as follows :—

- (1) Syracuse.—13th Trawler Group (A/S) ; 153rd B.Y.M.S. Flotilla ; six H.D.M.L.s from Force "A".
- (2) Augusta.—8th Trawler Group (A/S, M/S) ; 105th M.M.S. Flotilla ; four H.D.M.L.s from Force "B".
- (3) Catania.—4th Trawler Group ; four H.D.M.L.s from Force "A" ; two H.D.M.L.s from Force "B".
- (4) Group "P".—*Hunt* class destroyers, *Cromarty*, *Poole*, *Boston*, *Seaham*, and 22nd M.L. Flotilla to be based on Augusta when Catania was occupied.
- (5) The 20th M.G.B. Flotilla and 32nd M.T.B. Flotilla to be based on Augusta.

An inshore squadron was formed to act in support of the army under the orders of the Flag Officer, Sicily, consisting of the following ships :—

Erebus, *Roberts*, *Flores* (D), *Soemba* (D), *Cromarty*, *Poole*, *Romney*, *Seaham*. 22nd M.L. Flotilla, three L.C.R.s, three L.C.G.s, four L.C.F.s, and temporarily two *Hunt* class destroyers from Force "A".

14th July—D + 4. Two enemy aircraft shot down by M.L.s

The 3rd M.L. Flotilla (126 (S.O.), 121, 480 and 565) sailed from Augusta at 0015, for Syracuse. At 0045, an aircraft flying at 100 feet flew down the line on opposite course to port. The Flotilla opened fire and the aircraft circled and attacked M.L. 126, dropping a torpedo at 75 yards range. No. 126, increasing speed, took avoiding action and maintaining her fire hit the aircraft (an S.M.79) which crashed in attempting to turn away. Hearing another aircraft approaching the Flotilla in taking evasive action ran into the Syracuse smoke screen which reduced visibility to about a cable. At 0130, an aircraft flew down the line to starboard, banked astern and approached No. 565 from the port quarter. No. 565 opened fire and the aircraft blew up in mid-air. A third aircraft circled the flotilla as it emerged from the smoke screen and when fired at made off. Apparently these aircraft mistook the M.L.s for destroyers.

15th July—D + 5. Loss of M.G.B. 641

During the night of 14th/15th July the M.G.B. patrol in the Straits of Messina sighted and engaged a submarine which submerged. Shore batteries on the Italian mainland opened fire and hit M.G.B. 641, which sank with the loss of all hands.

Actions with E-Boats

At 2240/15, the 7th Flotilla (M.T.B.s 77 (S.O.), 82, 62 and 57) on patrol in area A sighted and, in line abreast, closed six E-Boats steering south hugging the coast. The enemy was temporarily lost to sight when the flotilla formed in line ahead and conformed to his course. But at 2300 the enemy was sighted again on the starboard bow steering north-west at 15-20 knots. No. 77 fired both torpedoes, and closing to engage with gunfire the last E-Boat in the line, immediately came under the fire of all the E-Boats and of shore batteries. The remainder of the division, being strung out by the high speed, was still out of effective range. The leading E-Boat blew up, presumably hit by a torpedo from No. 77. In the gun action which continued for about 15 minutes, the fourth E-Boat was seen to catch fire and the second to stop, both evidently damaged. From 2320 to 0215/16, shore batteries intermittently shelled the M.T.B.s and as No. 77 was hit repeatedly, the division disengaged under smoke cover. A near-miss caused two casualties in No. 82, obliging her to return to Augusta.

At 0515, five E-Boats steering north at 30 knots were sighted about three miles to the eastward engaging the 33rd M.T.B. Flotilla patrol. The division altered course to close and at 0530 opened fire. The E-Boats were making smoke and as one was evidently in trouble, No. 77 closed to finish her off, but was obliged to disengage when her gun jammed. The action was continued by Nos. 62 and 57, the former firing torpedoes, which missed ; they damaged the last E-Boat in the enemy line at a cost of two casualties (one fatal) in No. 57. All the M.T.B.s were slightly damaged ; No. 77, holed below the water-line, had to bale out by hand. Action was broken off at 0600 when shore batteries on the south coast of Italy opened fire.

16th July—D + 6

The M.T.B.s and M.G.B.s operating the night patrols off the Messina Straits approaches began working from Sicilian bases.

50. ACTION WITH "REGOLO" CLASS CRUISER

17th July—D + 7

At 0215, a division of the 10th M.T.B. Flotilla (Nos. 315 (S.O.), 260, 313, 316) on patrol two miles south of Messina sighted a ship approaching at high speed from northward. In calm weather with a full moon she must have sighted the M.T.B.s for, after rounding Pezzo Point, she steered directly towards them forcing them to disperse, Nos. 315 and 316 crossing to the eastward. The enemy, recognized as a cruiser of the *Regolo* class, steered after them until obliged to turn south to avoid running ashore. On opening fire the enemy hit No. 316, which blew up ; No. 315 fired her torpedoes, which missed ahead. Nos. 260 and 313 having gained good positions then fired their torpedoes, one from No. 260 appeared to hit the cruiser on the starboard quarter abreast her after turret, for she stopped and went astern, turning first to port and then to

starboard before going ahead again down the Straits at high speed. Batteries on both sides of the Straits opened fire, straddling her before she twice fired recognition signals. No. 315 followed the enemy round Cape Dell Armi until it became clear that she was making for Taranto, apparently at about 40 knots, as No. 315 lost distance when making 38 knots. At 0250, No. 315 stopped and made an enemy report *en clair*. In this encounter the casualties were: M.T.B. 316 lost with all her crew; the commanding officer of No. 260 and one rating wounded. M.T.B.s 313 and 260 suffered only superficial damage. Information received later established that the enemy cruiser had not been hit.

18th July—D + 8

In the Straits of Messina during the night of 18th/19th July, the M.T.B. patrol engaged some E-Boats and claimed to have damaged two. Shore batteries opened fire, damaging M.T.B. 75 and causing six casualties.

19th July—D + 9

The Inshore Squadron, local and coastal forces, were placed under the orders of the Flag Officer, Sicily.

During the night of 19th/20th, the 10th Flotilla M.T.B. patrol sighted and attacked with depth charges a U-Boat off Reggio. Shore batteries opened a heavy fire on the M.T.B.s. The 7th Flotilla M.T.B. patrol sighted four E-Boats off Cape Dali, but was unable to press home an attack as the enemy withdrew.

20th July—D + 10

The 40th M.T.B. Flotilla was ordered to be based on Palermo to operate in the northern approaches to Messina.

21st July—D + 11

The *Quantock* and *Adrias* (G) engaged three E-Boats about a mile off shore north of Augusta. Both ships suffered minor damage and had some casualties. The E-Boats, which fired torpedoes, were all reported to have been damaged, two of them seriously.

During an air raid at Augusta, M.T.B. 288 was sunk at 0345, by a bomb exploding close to her stern. There were no casualties.

51. ORGANIZATION OF THE MESSINA STRAITS PATROLS

From 21st July until the end of the Sicilian Campaign the M.T.B. and M.G.B. Flotilla maintained nightly patrols in the Straits of Messina. Up to the end of July they were carried out solely by the coastal forces, for not until August were they supported by destroyers. The patrols had very few targets, only once firing torpedoes, but considerable opposition was experienced from the shore batteries, aided by powerful searchlights. Nevertheless the patrols thrust well up to Messina and on three occasions in the last fortnight penetrated to the north of the port. In the final stages a continual watch was kept on enemy traffic, three divisions of M.T.B.s relieving one another.

Fire from the enemy's batteries proved harrassing and frequently very accurate, but the enemy apparently made no systematic efforts to prevent the patrols reaching Messina. Mostly it seems that they were deliberately not molested during their passage up the Straits in order to be hotly attacked when returning.

22nd July—D + 12

During the night 21st/22nd July, the 33rd M.T.B. Flotilla swept as far as 16° 18' E. without sighting anything. The 19th M.T.B. Flotilla bombarded Taormina.

23rd July—D + 13

While patrolling off Bark South on a line running east and west of Correnti Island, H.D.M.L. 1158, at 0345, attacked a submarine contact dropping two depth charges, search was then taken over by two destroyers.

25th July—D + 15

The 43rd M.T.B. Flotilla operating from Palermo in the northern approaches to Messina was ordered not to operate north of 38° 08' N.

26th July—D + 16

The 13th Corps having reported that enemy landing craft had been observed entering Catania, the F.O. Sy. proposed to employ a division of M.G.B.s to patrol the area.

On 26th July, while the *Troubridge* (D. 24), *Petard*, *Offa* and *Piorun* (P) were carrying out an A/S sweep, the *Petard* in 36° 55' N., 15° 26' E., obtained a contact. Three depth charge attacks were made by the *Petard* and *Offa* and the *Hurworth* and *Aldenharn* also swept the area without result.

27th July—D + 17

The M.G.B.s patrolling off the coast during the night 26th/27th fired on a south-bound road convoy two miles north of Taormina. For the first time searchlights and shore batteries south of 38° 00' N. were entirely inactive.

During an air raid on Syracuse at 1100, M.T.B. 63 was sunk with the loss of one officer and two ratings killed.

28th July—D + 18

M.G.B.s at close range bombarded the Giardini railway station, trains and warehouses, causing extensive damage and starting fires. The enemy replied ineffectively with heavy machine-gun fire. North of Reggio the M.T.B. patrol was fired on without damage by shore batteries.

Captain J. F. Stevens, R.N., relieved Captain A. G. V. Hubback, R.N., in command of the Coastal Forces, Mediterranean.

30th July—D + 20

All H.D.M.L.s and the 22nd M.L. Flotilla from Tunisian ports were ordered to be based on Augusta.

52. OPERATIONS DURING AUGUST

1st August—D + 22

Three M.G.B.s on patrol off Cape Dell Armi engaged a force of E-Boats. One E-Boat was severely damaged and the guns of another silenced before touch was lost. M.G.B.s 660 and 557 suffered superficial damage and had some casualties.

6th August—D + 27

The patrols reported flares in the Taormina and Reggio areas also many lights and much activity at Messina.

10th August—D + 31

The M.T.B. patrol operating off Messina was fired on by shore batteries. No. 265 was hit, her commanding officer slightly wounded, and she was towed back in a severely damaged condition. The M.G.B.s off Cape Dell Armi were also engaged intermittently by shore batteries but were not damaged.

11th August—D + 32. Attack on Enemy shipping

At 2250, the 20th M.T.B. Flotilla (Nos. 289 (S.O.), 295, 290) patrolling in area A with the co-operation of flare dropping aircraft, sighted a ship in the centre of the Straits which, as the flotilla closed in, rounded Messina breakwater. At 2303, in the light of a gigantic explosion on the land, three medium merchant ships and some small craft were sighted steering for Messina. At 2310 at a range of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles they were illuminated by a flare. The flotilla fired six torpedoes in succession. The flash and smoke of an explosion, observed in the centre of the Straits at 2318, may have been a hit, as no bombs or flares were dropped at this time by aircraft. At 2319, when No. 289 was held in the beam of a searchlight on the Italian coast the flotilla disengaged to the southward. This was the only opportunity that the light coastal forces had of attacking enemy traffic crossing the Straits.

13th August—D + 34

The M.T.B. patrol operated within three miles of Messina and M.G.B.s off Taormina. No shipping was sighted but shore batteries opened fire.

To prevent the enemy evacuating his forces from Sicily the light coastal forces, monitors and destroyers were ordered to penetrate as far up the Straits as practicable. A pronounced increase of shipping movements across the Straits by day was reported.

14th August—D + 35

During the night 13th/14th the M.T.B. patrol sighted and chased three small fast boats off Messina, but failed to overtake them.

15th August—D + 36. Loss of M.T.B. No. 665

At 0124, the 2nd Division, 33rd M.T.B. Flotilla (Nos. 640 (S.O.), 665, 670) in $38^{\circ} 11\frac{1}{2}'$ N., $15^{\circ} 36\frac{1}{2}'$ E., was illuminated by a searchlight. Turning 180° to port the patrol made smoke while batteries on both coasts opened fire hitting No. 665 and setting her on fire. As the shelling was intense and accurate Nos. 640 and 670, unable to assist, continued on a southerly course. At 0154, M.T.B. 76 signalled "Do you require assistance?" and was requested to close with despatch. Hoping to reach No. 665 in this smaller M.T.B., the Senior Officer embarked in No. 76 and proceeded north, hugging the Sicilian coast until intensive fire from the batteries obliged him to abandon the attempt. M.T.B.s 315 and 85, which were both fitted with silencers, then tried, and they reached as far as $38^{\circ} 09'$ N., $15^{\circ} 35'$ E. although constantly under shell-fire.

When last seen No. 665 was burning fiercely with occasional explosions drifting towards the Sicilian coast. The search for survivors was continued until first light (0445) without results.

24th Destroyer Flotilla attacked by E-Boats. 15th August

At 2227, when the *Troubridge* (D.24), *Tyrian* and *Tumult* were patrolling the South Calabrian coast in line abreast, the *Tyrian* obtained radar contact with a group of echoes and made an enemy report. Course was altered and speed increased to close. At 2235, the *Troubridge* detected E-Boats bearing 310° and a minute later the noise of engines broad on the starboard bow. Course was altered towards, but the noise proved to be from an aircraft which passed down the starboard side. After altering course back again towards the enemy bearing, the *Troubridge* detected torpedoes approaching to port. One passed under the bridge and another down the port side, two more tracks were seen and combed, and the *Tyrian* sighted a track 80 yards off.

At 2240, the E-Boats were sighted retiring to the south-west under cover of white smoke. Giving chase, the *Troubridge* and *Tyrian* opened fire, using radar control, but no hits were observed on the E-Boats which divided into two groups, one retreating to the south-westward and the other to the north-west. The former group was chased until contact was lost at 7,000 yards, when, as the chase led towards the M.T.B.s' operational area, pursuit was abandoned at 2305. The presence of the aircraft, which was probably working with the E-Boats, undoubtedly created confusion in the situation.

16th August—D + 37

During the night 15th/16th, the M.T.B. patrol off Messina had two inconclusive engagements with E-Boats. Shore batteries aided by searchlights engaged the M.T.B.s, damaging two and forcing them to withdraw.

17th August—D + 38

The M.T.B. patrol in the Straits at 0205, sighted and challenged four landing craft about two miles south of Messina. Receiving no reply the M.T.B.s fired torpedoes. Later they were found to be friendly, fortunately no damage was done. Destroyers screened the M.T.B. patrol during the night and engaged enemy batteries and searchlights on the Calabrian coast.

The occupation of Messina on this day concluded the occupation of Sicily. Henceforward the activities of the light coastal forces were directed against the coasts of Italian mainland.

Although no striking operational successes could be claimed by the light coastal forces, their patrols were well maintained under conditions of considerable strain. No large-scale evacuations from Messina by night took place, as the patrols constituted a threat to any such attempt; but it was not possible entirely to prevent enemy movements. Air reconnaissance reports indicated that the enemy preferred to run the hazards of air attack by day. During the whole of the Sicilian campaign the casualties sustained by the light coastal forces amounted to 96 officers and men, killed, wounded and missing. The material losses were:—

British

One M.G.B. and three M.T.B.s. Several of the light craft were damaged in action but most of them only superficially.

Enemy

Two ~~one~~ submarines (U.561 and "Flutto")

Sunk or destroyed.—Three E-Boats, one A/S schooner, five aircraft.
Damaged.—Two submarines, eleven E-Boats.

53. ALLIED SUBMARINES' OPERATIONS

(Ref. Plan 15)

A significant role in the operation was played by the Allied submarines. During its planning stages the vitally important task of reconnoitring the beaches and coast defences of Sicily was performed by them. On their accurate observations, no less than on those of reconnaissance aircraft, greatly depended the final selection of the assault beaches. In this service, carried out by the *Unruffled*, *Unseen* and *Unrivalled*, soundings were verified, special C.O.P.P. parties landed at night in quest of detailed information, tidal movements were recorded and the configuration of the coastal features noted.

Elsewhere the usual routine of watching enemy bases was maintained prior to the assault.

The Commander-in-Chief's intentions and the dispositions of the submarines have been given in Section 10.

All submarines on offensive patrols were ordered, until 13th July, to restrict their torpedo fire thus: merchant vessels under 4,000 tons were not to be attacked; a full salvo of torpedoes was to be kept for cruisers or larger warships. Unfortunately few of the last ever ventured to sea.

Towards the end of June, the submarines detailed for patrol in the northern area sailed for their stations, where they arrived on or about 4th July. The submarines of the patrols north of the Straits of Messina reached their stations by 6th July; likewise those of the Taranto patrol, with the exception that the *Tactician* took the place of the *United* until 10th July.

Beacon Submarines

The groups of beacon submarines were sailed as follows:—

Eastern Task Forces beaches.—From Malta on 6th July.

Western Task Forces beaches.—From Algiers, 30th June, 1st July; and from Bizerta, 4th July.

They discharged their most responsible tasks with efficiency and resource, thus contributing greatly to the initial success of the assault forces.

After arriving off their beaches, they first reconnoitred them and selected land-marks for reference. Only one Folbot from the *Unseen* (Bark East) was missing from its station on the night of D-day. The *Seraph* reported being prevented from laying her buoy on the 8th by a passing E-Boat, and the *Shakespeare* was interrupted by aircraft overhead. Undetected by the enemy all the submarines took up their marking stations by 2300, 9th July; their signals were picked up by the approaching assault forces.

From the first dispositions of the submarine force it may be seen that, apart from the beacon submarines, it was employed offensively to deny the enemy access to the assault area during the crucial stages of putting the military assault forces ashore. They kept the ring on its outer fringe and prevented or harassed the enemy in his efforts to reinforce and supply his troops in Sicily. By their presence he was obliged to carry out most of such movements over his land communications. Two gaps could not be closed by submarines, namely, the Straits of Messina at its crossing point and the north-west corner of Sicily, with its ports of Palermo, Trapani and Marsala. In the event the enemy made no effort to employ his main surface forces and only operated M.A.S., E-Boats and submarines in the invasion area.

The Restrictive Order

The effect of the order restricting the submarines' use of torpedoes seems to have proved somewhat drastic. For instance, in the Messina Straits area; the *Unruly* sighted three enemy submarines before the order was rescinded; but could only attack one; the *Sokol* sighted one submarine and reserved fire hoping for a better opportunity; the *Ullor* sighted three submarines while the order was operative. Between the 10th and 13th July, at least six enemy submarines passed through the Straits of Messina into the area of operations where they were able to make attacks on our covering forces, notably on the *Newfoundland* and *Cleopatra*.

Redisposition of Submarine Patrols, 18th July

On 18th July a redisposition of submarine patrol areas was brought into force. The main patrol areas were stated as:—

- (1) Gulf of Taranto covering the port.
- (2) Gulf of Genoa and north-east and north-west coast of Corsica.
- (3) North coast of Sicily and the northern entrance to the Straits of Messina.

The change was due to the progress of the military operations and the opening up of Syracuse and Augusta. At later dates the areas given above, which only differ slightly from those of the first disposition, were modified from time to time. The close watch on Taranto was abandoned and submarines operated in the Adriatic off Bari, Brindisi, Valona and Durazzo. An occasional patrol operated on the Italian west coast and also on the south coast of France.

The total losses inflicted by submarines on the enemy's naval and mercantile shipping during the period of Operation "Husky" was approximately:—

Naval

Sunk.—One destroyer, ^{Three} ~~two~~ submarines, ² one A/S yacht, one mine-layer, 5 A/S schooners, one M.M/S, one trawler, two barges.

Mercantile

Sunk.—Eight ships of approximately 36,000 tons, three schooners, two tugs.

Damaged.—Five ships of approximately 21,000 tons, two schooners, one salvage tug.

In viewing the results of the submarines' activities, the serious dislocation of coastal trade, as well as the hindrance of traffic of a military character should be taken into account, though it cannot be exactly measured. Altogether it may be fairly claimed that the contribution of the submarine flotillas to the success of the campaign was effective and considerable.

1. The Italian submarine "Acciaio" which she sank on 13th July.
2. "Acciaio" sunk by "Husky" 13th July. "Husky" sunk by "Unruly" 15th July. "Mica" sunk by "Husky" 15th July.

CHAPTER IX

54. THE COVERING FORCES. PRELIMINARY MOVEMENTS

(Ref. Plan 2)

The organisation and orders for the naval covering force consisting of Force "H" have been given in detail in Sections 8 and 9.

Prior to the commencement of Operation "Husky" the three divisions of Force "H" assembled as follows:—

1st Division at ports on the North African Coast. 2nd Division at Alexandria. 3rd Division at Gibraltar.

The opening phase was one of concentration, to cover the movements of the convoys and it was carried out in stages conformably with the changing situation. The 1st and 2nd Divisions effected their junction in the Ionian Sea and covered the convoys approaching from Alexandria, while the 3rd Division covered those from the United Kingdom along the North African Coast. The role of Reserve Force was assigned to the 3rd Division, also the execution of the diversionary Operation "Fracture".

At 1500, 5th July, the 1st Division, 1st Battle Squadron: *Nelson* (F.O. "H"), *Rodney*, *Indomitable* (R.A.A.), screened by seven destroyers, sailed from Mers el Kebir. The 3rd Division, 1st Battle Squadron: *Howe* (S.O.), *King George V*, screened by nine destroyers, sailed from Gibraltar at 0600, 5th July. The two forces made a rendezvous off Oran at 1640, and entered Algiers at 0800, 6th July, where they completed with fuel.

1st Division, Force "H"

At 1400, 6th July, the 1st Division Force "H" with the *Euryalus* and *Cleopatra* sailed from Algiers to rendezvous with the 2nd Division from Alexandria in position 33° N., 18° E.¹ Apart from sighting a number of floating mines its passage was uneventful. During the day the *Indomitable* provided A/S air patrols, while shore-based aircraft acted as A/S escort and provided fighter cover at night. Six destroyers of Force "K" relieved the destroyers of the 1st Division screen off Malta.

At 0600, 8th July, the *Aurora* (Commodore, 12th C.S.) and *Penelope*, having sailed from Bone, 6th July and escorted convoy K.M.S. 18 through the Tunisian War Channel, joined the flag of the F.O. "H" south of Malta at 0600/8, and with the 4th and 24th D.F.s, were detached at 1100 to fuel at Malta.

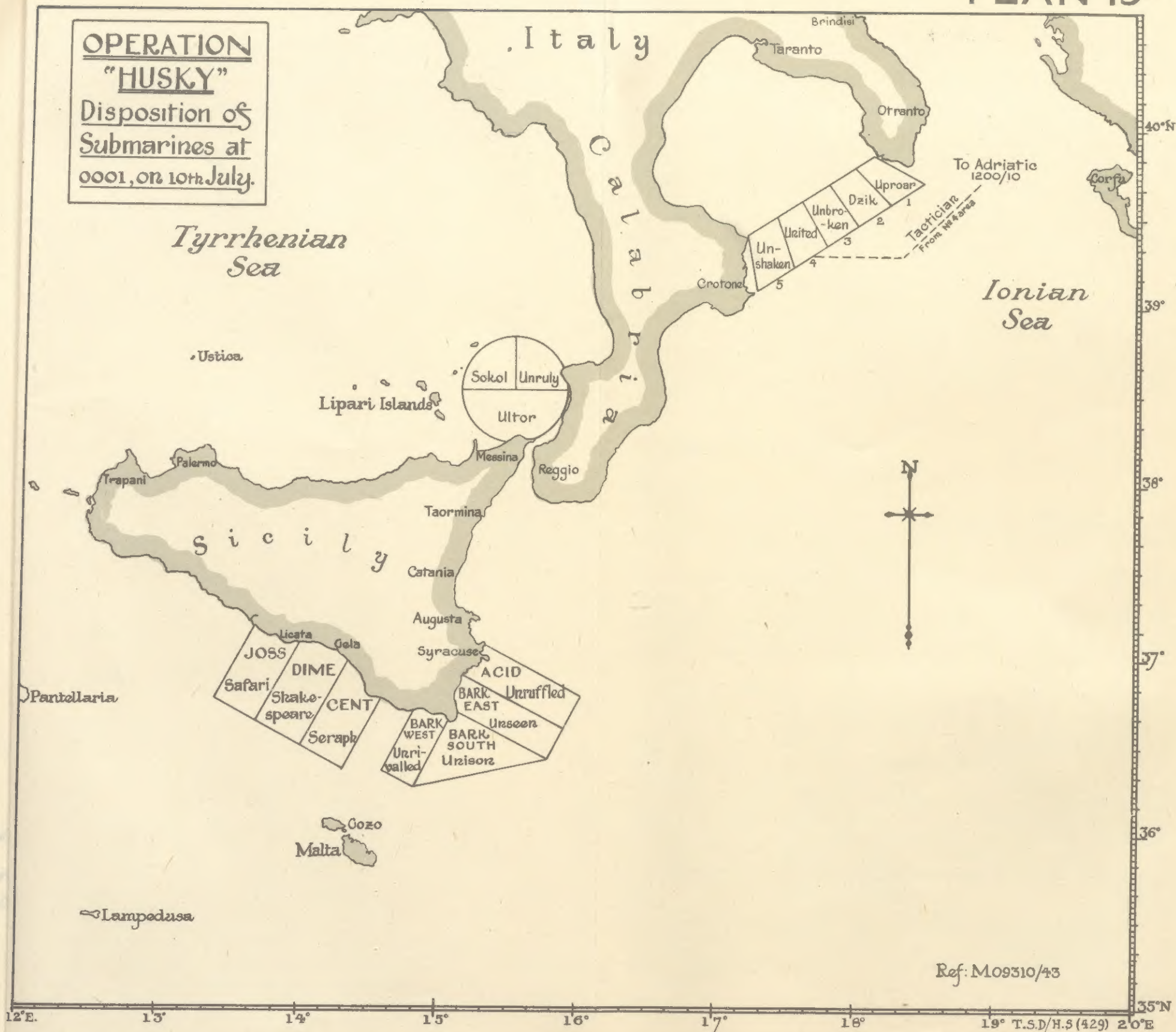
The *Euryalus* and *Cleopatra* were detached at 1450 to fuel at Tripoli. During the afternoon while the 1st Division steered southward, the Force "H" screen destroyers rejoined and the Force "K" destroyers were then detached to rendezvous with convoy M.W.F. 36. At 1900, course was altered eastward to make a morning rendezvous with the 2nd Division.

2nd Division, Force "H"

Meanwhile the 2nd Division, 1st Battle Squadron; *Warspite* (R.A. "H") *Valiant*, *Formidable*, screened by nine destroyers, had sailed from Alexandria at 1130, 7th July.

¹ Position R.V. on Plan 2.

OPERATION
"HUSKY"
Disposition of
Submarines at
0001, on 10th July.



Ref: M09310/43

9th July—D — 1

At 0600, the 1st and 2nd Divisions united at the rendezvous R.V. 240' south-east of Malta, where Force "R" also joined. The *Aurora* and *Penelope* rejoined at 0900 and the *Euryalus* and *Cleopatra* at 1140. During the day, while 12 destroyers were engaged in refuelling, Force "H" remained in the vicinity.

At 1245, Force "Q" (*Aurora*, *Penelope*, *Inglefield*, *Offa*) was detached with orders to cover the northern assaults and to carry out Operation "Arsenal." (See Section 55.)

At 1805, when a low-flying aircraft was sighted which may have been an enemy reconnaissance aircraft, the Fleet altered course to the eastward at 1915 in order to give the impression that it was closing the Greek coast.

After dark, the Fleet steered to arrive at daylight in 36° 40' N., 16° 25' E., within easy steaming distance of the Eastern Task Force area, so as to cover the assaulting forces from interference by enemy surface forces, and if required speedily to carry out bombardments by the battleships.

55. OPERATION "ARSENAL"

10th July—D-day

(Ref. Plans 1, 2, 14)

Force "Q" after having been detached approached the Sicilian Coast in line ahead open order at 18 knots. At 0110, course was altered for bombarding Catania. The targets allocated were:—

Aurora, the Central railway station; *Penelope*, the power station; and destroyers, the Bacino di Ponente.

Fire was opened at 0115 and continued until 0130, the mean range being 14,000 yards. Numerous bursts were seen in the areas, but, as the range was too great for starshell to burst beyond the targets, the features of the town could not be identified. An oil fire was visible as the Force proceeded northward.

At 0217, Force "Q" passed through position 37° 45' N., 15° 20' E., Taormina railway station was the selected target, all ships bombarding the area until 0228 at a mean range of 12,000 yards. Here again details of the target could not be distinguished, but the firing appeared to be satisfactory, bursts being observed in the area, the enemy did not reply.¹

During each bombardment the cruisers dropped smoke floats and the rear destroyer laid smoke. After the first bombardment the *Inglefield* dropped a delay action smoke float joined to a P.A.C. rocket timed for half an hour. This device acted, for the enemy was observed firing starshell. At 0410 an operator at Taormina informed Cagliari "There is a war on here."

On completion of the Taormina bombardment, Force "Q" withdrew and rejoined Force "H" at 0630, 10th July.

¹ The ammunition expended by Force "Q" in the two bombardments was:—

<i>Aurora</i>	..	..	..	..	..	134 rounds 6-in.
<i>Offa</i>	...	..	..	..	..	120 rounds 4.7-in.
<i>Penelope</i>	..	..	..	..	..	150 rounds 6-in.
<i>Inglefield</i>	..	..	..	..	..	113 rounds 4.7-in.

56. FORCE "H" NARRATIVE OF EVENTS

Meanwhile in Force "H", from 0220 10th July, onwards, flashes were observed in the direction of the assaults. A fighter umbrella was maintained over the Fleet until sunset, and throughout the day Force "H" cruised in the vicinity of its covering position. The hope entertained of drawing off enemy air attack on the beaches was disappointed. After 1800, judging that bombardment would not be required, the F.O. "H" altered course south-eastward until midnight, when course was altered back to regain the covering area.

At 1930, Force "Q" (*Aurora*, *Penelope*, *Raider* and *Ilex*) was detached to patrol the northern flank of the assault area keeping clear of the area in which M.T.B.s were operating. At 2302, two small bombs fell between the *Aurora* and *Penelope* and at 0025/11, others dropped without exploding astern of the *Penelope*. On seven occasions, Force "Q" fired at approaching aircraft.

11th July—D + 1

At 0600, Force "Q" rejoined the flag. Fighters from the *Indomitable* failed to intercept two unidentified aircraft, which had probably shadowed Force "Q".

At 0900, the *Aurora* and *Penelope* were detached to fuel at Malta. The *Petard* rescued four German airmen in a dinghy whose aircraft had crashed four days previously. The *Brecon* joined the flag at 1530, to relieve the *Petard* required to embark the Allied Commanders-in-Chief at Malta. Force "H" closed the eastern approaches to the Malta Channel during the afternoon in order to rendezvous with the *Aurora* and *Penelope*.

At 1700, Force "Q" (*Euryalus*, *Cleopatra*, *Ilex* and *Echo*) was detached for the night northern flank patrol, with instructions to return afterwards to Malta and refuel.

On the Commander-in-Chief's instructions the F.O. "H" adopted a procedure whereby one division of Force "H" closed Malta during the night and remained in the vicinity until the destroyers sent in had completed with fuel. It would then be succeeded by the other division which would carry out a similar routine, both divisions re-uniting on the following day to continue as a covering force eastward of Sicily. Force "R" was ordered to proceed to Malta.

Force "Q" encounters M.T.B.s

Force "Q", while steering close to the Sicilian coast for its patrol area, at 2224, detected by radar two small targets closing rapidly from the north. Though suspected to be friendly M.T.B.s, as they failed to answer when challenged, the *Euryalus* and *Cleopatra* engaged them with a flashless barrage fire on the line of approach, fired starshell and turned 90° away. On their part the M.T.B.s mistaking Force "Q" for an enemy fired three torpedoes. It was inevitable that, until identification was established, the M.T.B.s should be engaged. Happily no damage was done to either side in this encounter.

Until midnight Force "Q" was shadowed by unidentified aircraft, several were engaged, one which was thought to be friendly dropped a bomb near the *Ilex*, probably mistaking her for a U-Boat, as an aircraft report gave a position almost coinciding with that of Force "Q". Two heavy unexplained explosions occurred near the Force at 2347 in 37° 22' N., 15° 46' E. At daylight, Force "Q" proceeded to Malta to fuel.

12th July—D + 2

At 0430, three single aircraft, possibly on reconnaissance, closed within 10 miles of Force "H". The 2nd Division was detached, the 1st Division proceeding to Malta,¹ where it anchored off the breakwater and sent the destroyers in to fuel. The 1st Division sailed at 1315, passing the 2nd Division inward bound at the entrance of the North-east Channel.

The *Troubridge*, at 1953, obtained a bearing of a German U-Boat within 30' to the north-westward. As a precaution in case the U-Boat might have sighted the Force, the *Rodney* was ordered to drop a delay action depth charge. At midnight Force "H" altered course to the northward.

Force "Q" (*Euryalus*, *Cleopatra*, *Ilex* and *Echo*), having been ordered to carry out the night north flank patrol, sailed from Malta at 1715, for its area but keeping further to seaward of the Sicilian Coast.

"U.409" sunk by H.M.S. "Inconstant"

At 0653, 12th July, the *Inconstant*, escorting convoy M.K.F. 19 obtained a contact in 37° 12' N., 4° 00' E. (north of Dellys). Five depth charge attacks were made and at 0950 the submarine broke surface. The *Inconstant* opened fire scoring three hits and starting a fire which forced the submarine's crew to abandon ship. At 0959, the submarine U.409 sank slowly bows first, her casualties were 14 killed, including the First Lieutenant, and six seriously wounded. Four officers and 31 ratings were picked up by the *Inconstant*. By keeping between the *Empress of Russia* and the submarine when she obtained the contact, the *Inconstant* prevented an attack. It was established later that U.409 was the submarine attacked by the *Whimbrel* and *Cygnets* on 6th July (see Section 37).

57. MOVEMENTS OF FORCE "Z"

(Ref. Plan 2)

Force "Z", forming a reserve force under Captain C. H. L. Woodhouse, S.O., in the *Howe*, was based on Algiers from 6th July. While there, the orders for operation "Fracture" were discussed and, with the approval of the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, the islands of Levanzo and Favignana, off the north-west point of Sicily, substituted as targets instead of Marittimo Island.

9th July—D - 1

At 2030, the *Howe* (S.O.), *King George V*, *Jervis* (D.14), *Pathfinder*, *Penn*, *Panther*, *Paladin* and *Arrow* sailed from Algiers.

10th July—D-day

At 1245, the *Sirius*, *Dido* and *Isis* joined from Bone. Shortly after the *Isis* had taken station in the screen she obtained a contact and the force made an emergency turn. East of Galita Island the *King George V* fired at an Italian fighter aircraft. Force "Z" entered the war channel² at 1705, and when off Bizerta at 1910 altered course to return to Algiers.

¹ This was the first visit of British battleships to Malta since December, 1940.

² A swept channel extending from the vicinity of Galita Is. to the eastward of Cape Bon.